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AUTHOR Crim, Roger D.
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ABSTRACT

Attitudes about the role of women in higher education were examined in this research study that surveyed (1) opinions and attitudes of selected faculty men toward faculty women, and (2) opinions and attitudes of selected faculty women toward other faculty women. The population surveyed was all full-time faculty of the institutions of higher education associated with the New Hampshire College and University Council, a consortium of 13 institutions. A total of 1,020 faculty members responded: 28 percent women and 72 percent men. A profile of the respondents is presented regarding institution type, years on faculty, rank, degree, and age. Findings are reported in terms of data on faculty women related to: employment, advancement, personality characteristics, job mobility, teaching effectiveness; research and other scholarly writing; contributions to the profession; acceptance by associates; and the use of the full potential of faculty women. (LBH)

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AN ATTITUDINAL STUDY OF FACULTY MEN AND WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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by

Roger D. Crim
Assistant Professor of Education
Plymouth State College, U.S.N.H.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a widely held but fallacious belief in the U.S. that any woman can, if she wishes, plan, seek out, be trained for, and maintain a career of her choosing.[1]

Higher education in the United States was designed exclusively for the White, upper- or middle-class male. Its procedures, its rigid uninterrupted timetable, and its cost all but prohibit its use by women.[2]

Sex discrimination pervades at all levels of education within the United States. Nationwide, women make up only 24.2 percent of all full-time college and university faculties. Fewer than 10 percent of women in higher education reach the rank of full professor, and at each level of advancement within our educational system the percentage of women who participate declines.[3] Women obtain 50.4 percent of the high school diplomas and 43.1 percent of the bachelor's degrees granted. However, women obtain only 36.5 and 13.4 percent, respectively, of the master's and doctor's degrees granted.[4]

In addition to discrimination in terms of numbers, women are paid less than men holding identical rank. Women faculty members in higher education receive $1,500 to $2,000 less per year than do men in comparable situations.[5]

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[1] Audrey C. Cohen, "Women and Higher Education: Recommendations for Change," Phi Delta Kappan, LIII (November, 1971), 164.

[2] Cohen, 164.

[3] Letter from Dr. Marie D. Eldridge, Administrator, National Center for Educational Statistics, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, January 27, 1976.

[4] "Opportunities for Women in Higher Education," Intellect, C (January, 1974), 208.

[5] "Opportunities for Women," 208.

Moreover, women in higher education remain in rank longer without promotion and are not as actively recruited as men.[6]

This discrimination may not be a conscious conspiracy against women, but it is, according to Rossi, a "regular, persistent and a continuing experience for thousands of American women in higher education."[7] Petit claims: "Academic women are still treated as a small minority in most institutions of higher education, and as such they are subject to many of the same problems other minority groups experience."[8]

THE PROBLEM

Research into the problem of discrimination against women in higher education is handicapped by the scarcity of studies on attitudes toward women in academe. Petit says:

> There is an urgent need for more information extending beyond the areas of faculty and student distribution, to those of attitudes in employment and rates of promotion, to differences that may exist between women and men faculty, and to whether women may realize their full intellectual potential within present academic structures.[9]

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[6]Rita M. Petit, "Attitudinal Study of Faculty Women in Higher Education in Northwest United States" (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, University of Montana, 1972), p. 2.

[7]Alice Rossi, "Report of Committee W, 1970-71," American Association of University Professors Bulletin, LVII (June, 1971); 219.

[8]Petit, 2.

[9]Petit, 2.

This study focuses on attitudes about the role of women in higher education since basic changes must take place in men's attitudes.[10] The section on methodology shows how this study of male and female attitudes was accomplished.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As recognition of this problem grows, increasing pressures to solve it require study of all aspects of such discrimination. In the future, colleges and universities are certain to be confronted with increasing pressures from women to abjure all forms of sex discrimination.[11] This will require considerable effort. Such an effort will draw upon available information, in part, to attempt to solve this problem. As previously discussed, such material is not plentiful, providing a useful function for the present study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purposes of this study were twofold: 1) to survey opinions and attitudes of selected faculty men towards faculty women, and 2) to survey opinions and attitudes of selected faculty women toward other faculty women. The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. To what degree do the expressed opinions and attitudes of faculty men regarding the employment and advancement of faculty members indicate that opportunities are equal for men and women?

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[10]Cohen, 164.

[11]Petit, p. 12.

2. To what degree do the expressed opinions and attitudes of faculty men indicate that they feel certain differences exist between men and women faculty members which represent important reasons for not extending equal employment and advancement opportunities to men and women in higher education; for example, differences in regard to job mobility, personality characteristics, teaching effectiveness, production of research and other scholarly writing, contributions to profession, and acceptance by associates?

3. To what degree do the expressed opinions and attitudes of faculty women regarding employment and advancement of men and women faculty members support the opinions and attitudes of faculty men?

4. To what degree do the expressed opinions and attitudes of faculty women regarding certain differences between men and women faculty members support the opinions and attitudes of faculty men?

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions are presented to enable the reader better to understand the information included in the study.

Faculty Women and Faculty Men

Full-time teachers and/or researchers in an institution of higher education.

Full-time

A teaching and/or research load equivalent to nine semester hours.

Institution of Higher Education

A public or privately supported college or university granting at least a four-year or bachelor's degree.

New Hampshire College and University Council

A consortium of thirteen public and privately supported institutions of higher education in the state of New Hampshire.

DELIMITATIONS

The delimitations placed on various aspects of the study are as stated below:

1. The institutions of higher education have been limited to the 1976-77 membership of the New Hampshire College and University Council.

2. The study has been limited to the 1976-77 full-time faculties of the New Hampshire College and University Council member institutions.

METHODOLOGY

In this study the following specific procedures for planning and conducting the study were used.

The Opinionnaire

As the study was concerned with attitudes toward faculty women in higher education, it was deemed important to compare the attitudes of faculty men and faculty women towards women in academe. Because no absolute scale exists on which to measure the status and opportunities of women, it was also necessary to compare the status and opportunity of faculty women with those afforded faculty men.

A survey instrument developed by Petit[12] was used as the data-gathering instrument. The opinionnaire was composed of two parts. Part I was composed of biographical data to be used in reporting the profile of the respondents. Part II comprised thirty-two items, highlighting issues of the questions under study (a five point Likert scale was provided for responses).

Pilot Study

The opinionnaire was validated by Petit[13] for college and university administrators and faculty women. Because the instrument was not validated for use with faculty men in higher education, and because the original five point Likert scale was changed to a four point, forced choice scale, a pilot study was undertaken to validate further the instrument. In this study, ten faculty men at the Plymouth State College of the University System of New Hampshire were asked to respond to the instrument and specifically to question those items which appeared ambiguous or were not easily understood. The ten individuals of the pilot group, who completed try-out forms of the opinionnaire, indicated that the instrument seemed complete. No changes in the instrument were required.

The Population

The population selected for this study was composed of all full-time faculty of the institutions of higher education associated with the New Hampshire

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[12]Petit, pp. 128-135.

[13]Petit, pp. 128-135.

College and University Council (NHCUC). The NHCUC is a consortium of thirteen institutions located in New Hampshire.

A list of the full- and part-time faculty of the NHCUC institutions for the 1976-77 academic year was provided by the NHCUC. For the purpose of this study only data obtained from full-time faculty were used.

Obtaining the Data

A letter of transmittal and an opinionnaire was sent to faculty men and women. Forty-four percent of the faculty men and women responded to the first mailing. However, a follow-up letter and a second copy of the opinionnaire were sent to the faculty members not initially responding approximately two weeks after the original mailing. This second mailing brought the percentage of usuable returns of faculty men and women to sixty-one. A third mailing of the instrument and a letter of transmittal increased the rate of return to 77 percent.

In the original and follow-up mailings, a postage-paid, self-addressed return envelope was enclosed to encourage the respondents to complete and return the opinionnaire. The opinionnaires were sent to respondents during the fall of 1976.

ANALYZING THE DATA

The data collected from the women and men faculty are presented in both written and chart form. Responses by the two groups were tabulated on each item listed on the opinionnaire and subjected to the t-test. The weighted means demonstrate the extent of the observed differences between women and men faculty.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Institution

Twenty-eight percent (N=285) of the respondents are women; seventy-two percent men (N=735). Women make up a much larger percent of the faculties of the private institutions than the state supported institutions studied: 44 percent and 17 percent respectively. Overall, 74 percent of the faculty members of the institutions studied are male.

Years on Faculty

Women have fewer years as faculty members of the institutions studied than men. Eighteen percent of the men have sixteen or more years duty at their institution, compared to only 12 percent for women. Sixty percent of the women, as compared to 53 percent of men, have less than nine years duty. Thirty percent of the women have less than three years employment at their current institution compared to 22 percent of the men.

Rank

Sixty-one percent of the men hold rank of associate or full professor while only 28 percent of women hold the same rank. Thirty-three percent of the women hold ranks of lecturer or instructor; only 9 percent of the men hold similar rank.

Degree

Forty-nine percent of the respondents hold doctorate degrees. Thirteen percent of those holding terminal degrees are women compared to 87 percent by men. A much larger percentage of men than women hold doctorate degrees: 60 percent and 22 percent respectively.

Age

Larger percentages of women than men are under thirty years of age and over forty-nine years of age. Thirteen percent of the women are under thirty years of age compared to only 5 percent for men. Twenty-eight percent of the women are over 49 years of age compared to 23 percent of the men.

DATA UTILIZATION

The frequency of given responses of the faculty men and women to the thirty-two items of Part II of the opinionnaire is computed for each item and for each group. The responses were analyzed to determine the divergence among the two groups as to their attitudes towards faculty women in higher education. Significant differences from these analyses were determined to provide conclusions made pertaining to the divergence of the respondents at the .05 level of confidents. The parametric t-test statistic[14] was used as a test of this significance. Statistical computations revealed that only three of the thirty-two items treated were not significant at the .05 level. It was assumed that the two groups did differ significantly in their responses to the items.

DATA RELEVANT TO QUESTIONS EXAMINED

Data Related to the Employment of Faculty Women in Higher Education

Faculty men agreed more strongly than faculty women that employment opportunities were equal for men and women in their institution. There was

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[14] Norman H. Nie and others, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (2d ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975), pp. 218-248.

strong agreement to equal pay for equal work. Responses of the faculty women, however, showed the highest agreement.

There was agreement by both faculty men and women the employing agents favored the employment of better qualified women than men. Faculty men, however, more strongly agreed than faculty women.

Employing agents tend to think automatically in terms of men when filling a new position on the faculty.

Faculty women more strongly agreed than faculty men that employing agents tend to think automatically in terms of men when filling a new faculty position.

Both groups disagreed with the statement: Higher education institutions should have a greater proportion of men than women in their faculties. Responses of faculty women, however, expressed stronger disagreement than faculty men. Women comprised 28 percent of institution faculties studied.

Data Related to the Advancement of Faculty Women in Higher Education

Faculty women disagreed more strongly than faculty men with the statement: Few faculty women meet the preparation requirements for promotion to upper ranks. Data generated in Part I of the opinionnaire indicates that 60 percent of the faculty men have terminal degrees, whereas only 22 percent of the faculty women had such degrees.

Both groups disagree with the statement stating that few faculty women stay in their positions long enough to earn promotions to upper ranks. Faculty women show greater disagreement than faculty men. Data obtained in Part I of the instrument indicates significant differences in years on faculty of the two

groups. Twenty-nine percent of the faculty women had been at their present institution less than four years as compared to only 21 percent of the faculty men. Forty-six percent of the faculty men had been at their institutions over eight years; only 36 percent of the women had similar tenure.

Faculty men disagree more strongly than faculty women that faculty women are not as competitive in seeking advancements as faculty men.

Faculty men and faculty women strongly agree that there should be a merit system of appointments and promotions regardless of sex. Faculty men express stronger agreement than faculty women.

Both groups agree that advancement for women in higher education is a slow process. Faculty women express stronger agreement than men.

Both groups disagree, with no significant difference in responses, with the statement: Few faculty women produce the research required for promotion to upper ranks.

The two groups express different opinions with regard to the statement: Faculty women are often bypassed for promotion. Faculty women agree with the statement, whereas faculty men disagree.

Faculty men and faculty women both disagree with the statement: Few faculty women are sufficiently interested to put forth the effort to earn advancement to upper ranks. Faculty women express stronger disagreement than their male colleagues.

Data Related to Personality Characteristics of Women Faculty Members in Higher Education

Faculty women disagree more strongly than faculty men that faculty women have less of a professional commitment than do faculty men.

Both groups disagree with the following statement: Faculty women do not assume responsibility in decision-making as readily as faculty men. Faculty women disagree more strongly than faculty men.

Faculty women only slightly disagree that faculty women are taken less seriously than faculty men when sent out to represent the institution. Faculty men more strongly disagree.

Faculty men more strongly disagree than faculty women that faculty women accept subordination more readily than do faculty men.

Both groups agree that faculty women do want full equality, even if it does mean equal responsibility. Faculty women are in stronger agreement than faculty men.

Faculty women agree that faculty women should learn to broaden their career interests more persistently than they have to date. Faculty men, however, disagree.

Both groups disagree, faculty men more so than faculty women, that faculty women are more fearful than faculty men of conflict that might endanger their professional status.

Data Related to Job Mobility of Faculty Women in Higher Education

Faculty women and faculty men disagree with the statement: The turnover rate of faculty women is higher than that of faculty men. There is no significant difference in the response of the two groups.

Both groups disagree, but not as strongly, with the following statement: Faculty women are less mobile geographically than faculty men. Faculty women disagree more with the statement than faculty men.

Data Related to Teaching Effectiveness of Women Faculty Members in Higher Education

Faculty men more strongly disagree than faculty women with the following statement: Faculty women are more dedicated to teaching than faculty men.

Faculty men more strongly disagree than their female counterparts that faculty women are more responsive to students than faculty men.

Both groups disagree with the statement: Cultural attitudes of men colleagues and of students prevent a woman in higher education from being an effective teacher. Faculty men more strongly disagree than faculty women.

Data Related to Research and Other Scholarly Writing of Women Faculty Members in Higher Education

With no significant differences in their responses, both faculty women and faculty men disagree with the statement: Faculty women publish less than faculty men.

Data Related to Contributions to Profession of Women Faculty Members in Higher Education

Both groups disagree with the statement: Part-time faculty members do not give sufficient thought and time to their profession. Faculty women disagree more strongly than faculty men.

Faculty women disagree more strongly than faculty men that faculty women have higher rates of sick leave than faculty men.

Data Related to Acceptance by Associates of Women Faculty Members in Higher Education

Faculty men more strongly agree than faculty women that faculty women are regarded favorably by their colleagues.

Faculty women more strongly disagree than faculty men that faculty women are less responsive to their colleagues than faculty men.

Data Related to the Use of the Full Potential of Faculty Women in Higher Education

Both groups agree that faculty women who wish to develop their potential have adequate opportunity to do so. Faculty men more strongly agree than faculty women.

Both groups agree that the exploration of the potential of women in higher education has been neglected. Faculty women, however, agree more strongly than their male colleagues.